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June 14, 2001

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## NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

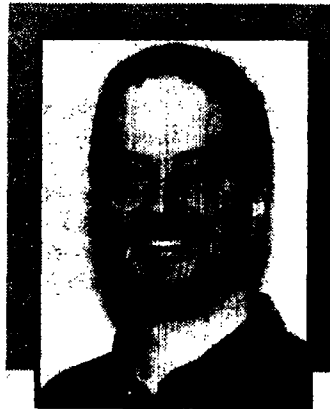
# SOAR to hold public rally against Adams Mark Hotel

For only the second time in its 25-year history, the Streeter-ville Organization of Active Residents is taking it to the streets.

At 11 a.m. Saturday, June 23, SOAR will hold a public rally at Ogden Park (Columbus and Illinois) against a planned Adams-Mark hotel in south Streeterville. Its leaders acknowledge it's an unusual step for the neighborhood organization, but say it's a necessary one.

"A rally is not really our modus operandi, (but) we felt we needed some visibility," said Betty Eaton, chairwoman of SOAR's Real Estate Committee and director of the SOAR Neighbors Action Committee to Stop the Adams-Mark.

SOAR says the 1,600-room convention hotel, to be located between Columbus Drive and North Water, Illinois and New streets, would bring a lot to the neighborhood — and all of it negative. The list includes increased traffic and its concomitant air pollution and increased difficulty for emergency vehicles getting through, noise, pickpockets and purse snatchers attracted by the increased tourist traffic, and idling trucks and tour buses.



By Mark Lawton

Besides, asks SOAR, how many hotels do we need?

It may have a point. According to the Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association, there are 110 hotels in the downtown area, totaling just fewer than 31,000 rooms. In addition, there are nine hotels under construction in or adjacent to Streeterville. Those hotels, which will be completed between now and 2003, will add a total of 3,067 rooms to the area.

And that's not counting 2,500 residential units being constructed just a block east of the site as part of the River East Project. Or the 9 million visitors to Navy Pier each year, a number expected to increase.

"People say, 'You live downtown, what do you expect?' We expect to be able to breathe and get around the neighborhood," said Eaton. "Something will be built there. It's too valuable a property. It should be something less deleterious to the community."

With that goal, the committee has been recruiting area condominium associations. As of press time, they've gained the support of nine, which contain roughly 2,500 units.

Still, no one expects it to be easy. "We know this is an uphill battle," said Eaton.

Ald. Burton Natarus (42nd) agrees. "I can understand (SOAR's) point of view, but we have a legal impediment," said Natarus. "This section was designated as commercial. When you have a planned development that has been enacted, it's hard to turn that around."

While the alderman says he is negotiating with the developer for a smaller hotel or perhaps one without convention facilities, "I can't guarantee that."

Still, SOAR has persevered in the past. In 1988, the owners of the John Hancock wanted to build an addition, which would have enclosed the plaza in front of the building all the way up to Michigan Avenue. The neighbors, including the condo association in the Hancock, rose in protest, and engaged in public picketing as well as pressuring politicians. Ultimately the plan was defeated.

Meanwhile, SOAR has some breathing room. Though the St. Louis based HBE Corp. (which owns the Adams-Mark chain) did not return calls for this column, both Eaton and Ald. Natarus say that due to the economic downturn, HBE is still searching for financing.

Conceivably, SOAR could have a temporary ally in Local 1 of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union. The 14,000-member union spent last summer and fall campaigning against the hotel chain for alleged labor discrimination against employees. No such alliance has been formed, however.

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